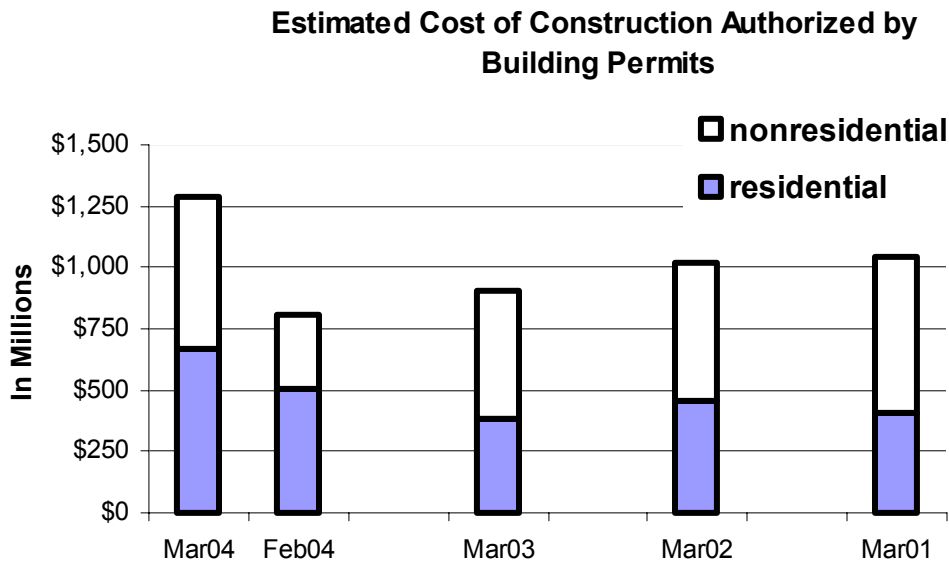


MARCH 2004 HIGHLIGHTS

March is usually a good month for the construction industry. It is the time of the winter thaw and many new developments break ground. This March was a record-setting month. There were 3,407 new dwellings authorized by permits. This is the highest monthly total since the Department of Community Affairs began publishing construction statistics back in 1996. Estimated construction authorized by building permits also reached a new high, \$1,290.3 million. Between January and March, construction officials authorized \$2,794.2 million in construction and March's activity accounted for 46.2 percent of this amount. Residential construction for the month totaled \$666.8 million (51.7 percent) and nonresidential work was \$623.5 million (48.3 percent); 556 municipalities reported.



Top Municipalities

The Town of West New York in Hudson County had the most work in March. It also had the most new houses. Monthly activity totaled \$67.6 million. Nearly all of this was from a single permit for \$67 million authorizing work to begin on a nine-story, Port Imperial development that will have 348 apartments on the Hudson waterfront across from New York City. Bloomfield Township in Essex County had \$59.9 million in construction. An addition to a public high school accounted for most of this work.

Other top municipalities were Mount Laurel in Burlington County (\$38.3 million), Raritan Township in Hunterdon County (\$31.8 million), Wayne Township in Passaic County (\$29.7 million), Hamilton Township in Atlantic County (\$29.7 million), and the

City of Newark in Essex County (\$29.5 million). A new office/retail complex accounted for \$30 million of activity in Mount Laurel. A new, \$24.8-million middle school is the big project in Raritan. Wayne reported five big school additions or alterations in March, the largest of which was a \$10.6-million addition to Wayne Valley Senior High School. Hamilton reported a \$25.4-million addition to the middle school. Most of the work in Newark was for new houses. The City had 229 authorized units in March, second only to West New York.

New House Prices

The price of a newly constructed house increased by 1.3 percent compared to last quarter. Between January and March 2004, 4,280 new houses were completed and began enrollment in a new home warranty program. The median sales price of these houses was \$319,650. Hunterdon and Bergen Counties had the most expensive houses.

<i>New House Prices</i>			
Period	Number of New Houses	Median Sales Price	Percent Change in Sales Price
1996	20,903	\$183,300	
1997	21,640	\$190,000	3.7%
1998	23,884	\$209,980	10.5%
1999	24,479	\$224,496	6.9%
2000	25,058	\$231,728	3.2%
2001	23,372	\$253,670	9.5%
2002	23,647	\$274,705	8.3%
2003	22,226	\$307,168	11.8%
1 st Quarter 2003	4,465	\$295,000	
2 nd Quarter 2003	5,540	\$300,793	2.0%
3 rd Quarter 2003	6,091	\$307,950	2.4%
4 th Quarter 2003	6,130	\$319,650	3.8%
1 st Quarter 2004	4,280	\$323,870	1.3%

Source: N.J. Department of Community Affairs, 5/7/04